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# VALUES INFUSION: A SYSTEMATIC RESPONSE TO CATHOLIC IDENTITY

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*Archdiocese of New York*

*This article explains how the Archdiocese of New York responded to the need for making its values-based approach to education more conspicuous and formal. Through ECOS, a curricular change process, the Office of the Superintendent of Schools spearheaded a dialog and a program focusing on Catholic identity and values infusion as one source for the resurgence of that identity.*

One of the purposes of education is to prepare students to become responsible citizens. Any discussion about education is also a discussion about the kind of society we envision. Education is crucial to the functioning of society and the formation of character. As one character education advocate says, "...educating for character is a moral imperative if we care about the future of our society and our children" (Lickona, 1993, p. 11).

Society is replete with examples of youth violence, domestic violence, vandalism, greed, bigotry, and lack of respect for authority. It has been said that students lack a moral compass (Fowler, 1994) and that they are victims of ethical illiteracy (Lickona, 1993). If we have become desensitized to this fact, the recent actions of two young men in Littleton, Colorado, significantly raised our consciousness.

## THE CHALLENGE

Education is at the forefront as a remedy for some of these social ills. "Schools cannot be ethical bystanders at a time when our society is in deep moral trouble" (Lickona, 1991, p. 5). Schools are being called upon by some to provide an adequate foundation for young people now so that as adults

they will be better equipped to face society's challenges. Some want schools to address the immediate needs of youngsters' moral guidance by preparing them to survive in an amoral youth culture. In essence, educational institutions at every level and in every sector are expected to be more responsive to the emerging needs of the larger society.

Catholic education is coming to the forefront as having a viable mission as well as the organization required to meet some of today's instructional and structural educational challenges. Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) begin their study of *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* by stating that the organization and operation of Catholic schools offer important lessons for anyone who is concerned about educational renewal. The Congregation for Catholic Education (1998) reminds us:

In the Catholic school's education project there is no separation between time for learning and time for formation, between acquiring notions and growing in wisdom. The various school subjects do not present only knowledge to be attained, but also values to be acquired and truths to be discovered. (Par. 14)

Concern about the moral condition of society in the United States is prompting a reevaluation of the school's role in teaching values as well as the need for moral literacy (Bennett, 1993; Lickona, 1993). We must know what virtues look like, what they are in practice, how to recognize them, and how they work. Bennett suggests that we often speak of values as something to have, to own. Through the richness of literature, he portrays "morality and virtues not as something to be possessed, but as the central part of human nature, not as something to have but as something to be, the most important thing to be" (p. 14). Elias believes that moral persons have a moral style that others find compelling. "The beauty of the moral person has a fullness of life which enables this person to tower over others" (1989, p. 191).

Just as an awareness of the complexities within today's society has mandated an emphasis on values education within the public sector, it has also forced the Catholic school to reexamine its identity and to make its values-based approach even more conspicuous.

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops (1972), in its document *To Teach as Jesus Did*, defined Catholic schools around the themes of doctrine, community, and service. Instruction in religious truth and practices and its integration into the totality of the lives of the students are integral to Catholic schools and are what distinguishes them from other schools. In their 1976 statement *Teach Them*, the Conference reiterated that the integration of religious truth and values with the rest of life is not only possible in Catholic schools; it distinguishes them from others.

The portrait of the post-Vatican II Catholic school teacher has changed.

Catholic school classrooms are primarily staffed with lay teachers. Recent statistics from the Archdiocese of New York show that 89% of its teachers are lay men and women. In addition, classrooms are largely staffed with teachers who have been educated in the post-Vatican II era. The shift from pre-Vatican II to post-Vatican II was enormous. Veverka (1993) believes that while Vatican II initiated much-needed, much-welcomed, and very liberating changes, it also initiated a period of disquieting uprootedness for Catholics in the United States. The impact of Vatican II was felt by individuals and institutions.

The challenge Veverka offers for Catholic education is that it be historically sensitive to the richness of tradition while developing "critical interpretative skills within the community of faith" (1993, p. 248). Given the wide divergence of background and education in Church doctrine and practices, there is a crucial need for Catholic school administrators and teachers to understand what is meant by Catholic identity. A uniform, common, conscious acquisition of Church doctrine and practice can no longer be assumed. It must be worked at so that it can be exhibited. And this must occur at a time in history when diversity is seen as a value.

Starratt (1985) believes that one of the demands which can legitimately be made of teachers in Catholic schools is the infusion of religious teaching throughout the curriculum. This infusion presumes a fairly sophisticated knowledge of Catholic theology, history, and culture, as well as knowledge of the academic disciplines and an extensive repertoire of pedagogical strategies. Few teachers possess these prerequisites for infusing Catholic truths and values into the curriculum. Yet, we demand that they do this! Traviss and Shimabukuro believe that "a new post-Vatican II crisis developed for the Catholic schools: the evangelical formation of teachers and administrators" (1999, p. 335). The task of professional development is daunting.

## WHAT WE DID

In response to this challenge, the Office of Schools of the Archdiocese of New York, under the leadership of Superintendent Dr. Catherine Hickey, decided to focus on a Catholic values infusion project the aims of which were: (a) raising the awareness of educators in the schools to the need to integrate Catholic values into the curriculum, and (b) familiarizing teachers and administrators with the vast opportunities that exist to combine values and cognitive learning.

The transition to the need for values in education, including Catholic education, was made by the use of several strategies: brainstorming, webbing, and think-pair-share, thereby leading teachers to the realization that learning must be integrated and connected.

A process called Educational Community Opportunity for Stewardship

(ECOS) was chosen to prepare Catholic school educators in infusing Catholic values throughout the curriculum.

ECOS was designed by Dr. Francis Thompson in 1972 in response to a perceived federal need. The government sought an infusion program for including new concepts into an existing curriculum. ECOS was initially piloted as a vehicle for use with any federal program that attempted to teach new concepts "across the curriculum." By 1975, the ECOS process became part of the National Dissemination Program throughout the United States as a method for infusing "intruder" concepts into an existing curriculum.

The ECOS (1972) process is based on six steps to infusion and applies to all subject areas.

Step 1: Preparatory phase; identify current course content.

Step 2: Select units to be infused.

Step 3: Define key concepts within selected units.

Step 4: List strategies currently used to teach the concepts.

Step 5: Identify the values that are inherent in the content.

Step 6: Create strategies and activities that link the content and the values. (pp. 15-17)

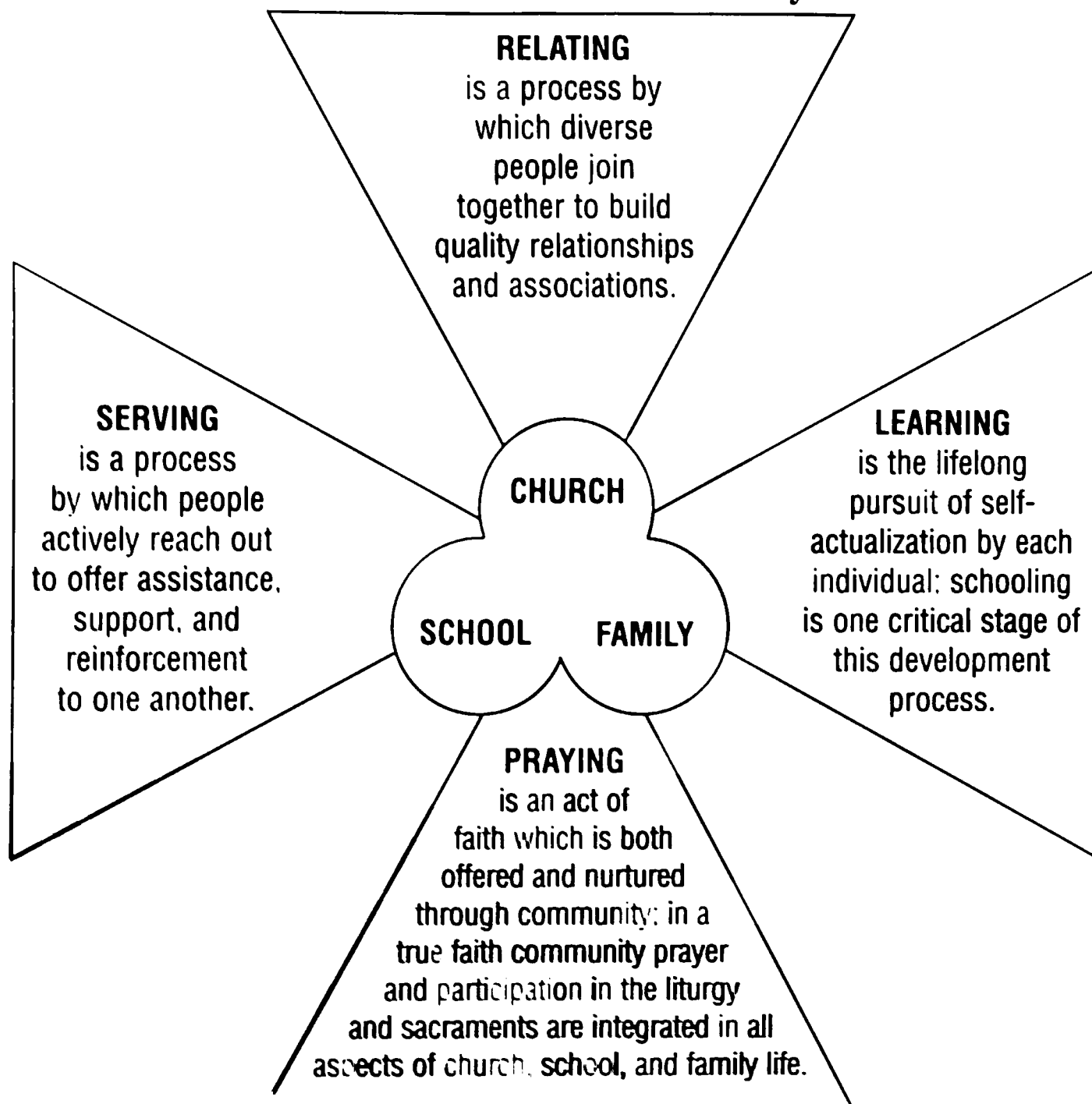
Using ECOS as the instrument, an inservice program was designed for values infusion in the New York Archdiocese. The program involves two components: theory and process. In the theory portion of the staff development workshop, teachers learn about the linguistic theory, the multiple intelligence theory, or brain theory. The purpose is to enable them to focus their attention on a common theme and to use that theme to look at themselves in a new way.

Teachers are then asked to create a blueprint of the Catholic values they teach and model within the school. Cooperative learning groups are formed according to grade level taught. The ideal inservice includes teachers from several schools grouped according to the grades they teach. Fewer participating schools necessitates that the groups be based on level: early childhood, primary, intermediate, and upper. Within these groups, teachers identify units within their curriculum which lend themselves to the infusion of the values already cited. After sharing strategies which they traditionally used to teach concepts within the selected units, they devise new activities which highlight the values. The experience concludes with teachers from each grade level sharing their "infused" lesson plans. The best of these plans are distributed to all schools.

Throughout the pilot phase of this project, consistent and varied reports and evaluations were integrated into the process. During this phase teachers indicated that the infusion program could not and should not stand alone. In essence, they wanted the support of a much more detailed and concrete

framework. The pilot phase was extended for a year while a manual entitled *Catholic Education Community* was created. The purpose of this manual is to bring together philosophy, goals, objectives, suggested methods, and models for implementation. It was designed as a stepping off point for further expansion by individual schools. It depicts the conceptual and operational framework upon which the entire program was based. (See Figure 1.)

**Figure 1**  
**Conceptual Framework**  
**Catholic Education Community**

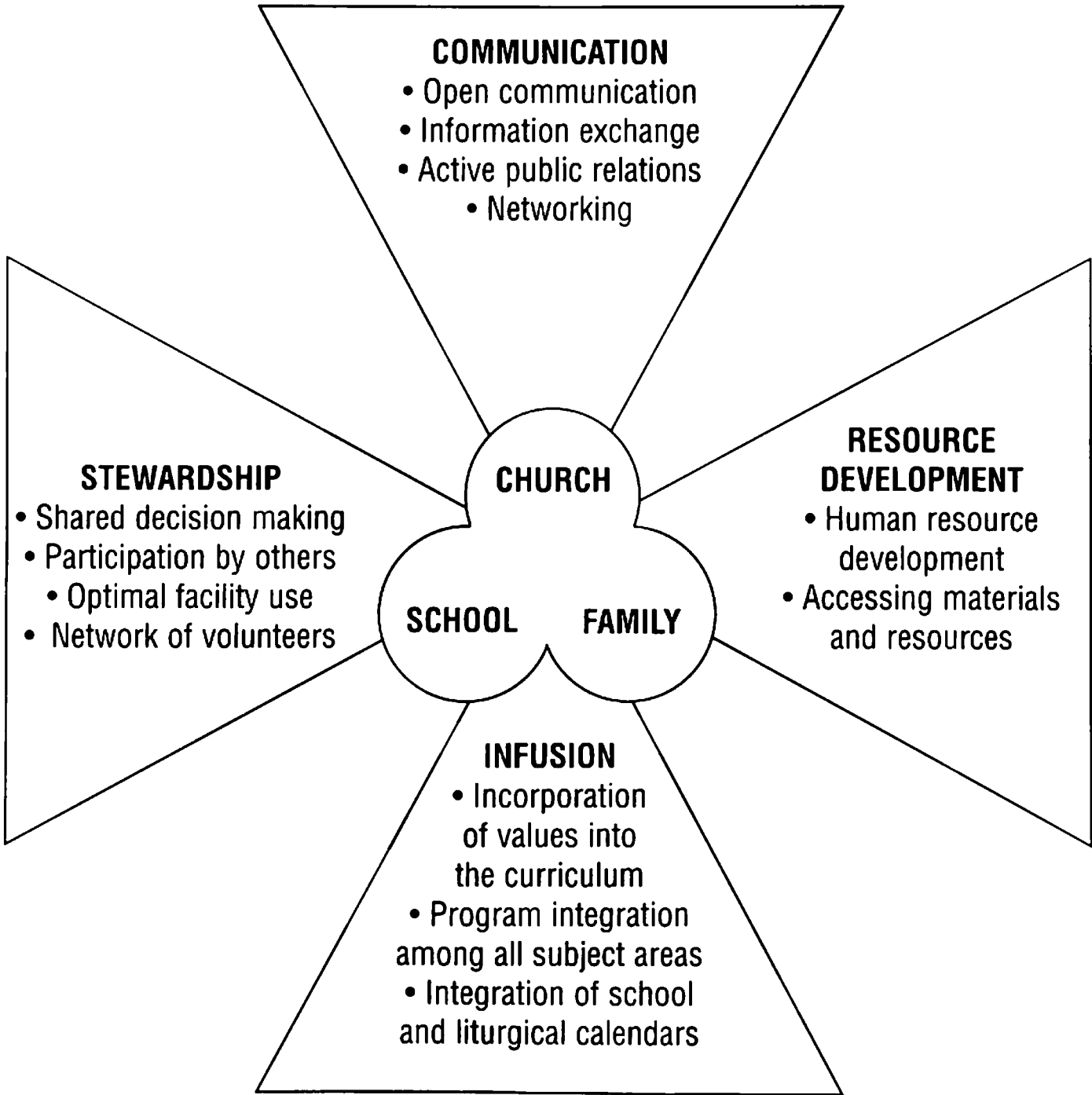


The community illustrated in *Catholic Education Community* was viewed as the core community of church, school, and family continuously united in and supportive of the activities of relating, serving, learning, and praying. These activities were considered to be the heart of the education ministry for the Catholic school.

In its broadest sense, the Conceptual Framework of the Catholic Education Community represented the comprehensive mission of the Catholic school to improve the quality of Catholic life by articulating the educational ministry of the Catholic Church.

The conceptual framework established the “what” of the Archdiocese’s vision of change. It had to be accompanied by a mechanism which operationalized its intents—that is, the “how” of the infusion process and the supporting environment. Each activity from Figure 1 was represented in the Operational Framework (see Figure 2) by a vehicle which would clearly define and support the activity. These vehicles became the four chapters of the manual: Communication for a Relating Community, Resource Development for a Lifelong Learning Community, Stewardship for a Serving Community, and Infusion for a Praying Community.

**Figure 2**  
**Operational Framework**  
**Catholic Education Community**



## WHAT WE LEARNED

We learned that teachers needed more than a process to concretize and support values infusion. While the archdiocese was looking for a formal infusion of values throughout the curriculum, the teachers were looking for a formalized mechanism to support their endeavors.

The creation of the *Catholic Education Community* manual was an unexpected outcome of the Values Infusion Program. The faculty members of the 11 piloted schools communicated their need for the enunciation of a framework within which ECOS could operate at the same time the presenters were communicating to them the need of a process to formalize this aspect of Catholic identity.

In addition to the need for a framework, there was common agreement among the teachers that the role of the principal is pivotal to the success of the ECOS process. Even though teachers believe there is a certain atmosphere present within a Catholic school, their definition of Catholic identity and the educational components required to support and to promote that identity is informal and intangible. Teachers look to the principal for the means of sustaining their emphasis on Catholic values and of defining what it means to be a Catholic school.

Principals must be offered an inservice program through which to become participants in the process. An awareness session is insufficient; the hands-on component should be provided for all educators. If the infusion of Catholic values is to be considered a priority in maintaining Catholic identity, tools to sustain that priority are essential. This necessitates inservice on institutionalizing change as well as on the values process and Catholic identity. If more change demands more leadership (Kotter, 1990), the diocesan education office must provide comprehensive and accessible leadership programs for principals regarding topics such as values infusion. These will complement and enhance the required knowledge of the theological and philosophical foundations which are at the heart of the Catholic education apostolate.

While ECOS training provides a common consciousness raising within the faculty of each school, it struggles to provide the vehicle for sustained emphasis on values infusion as a key ingredient of Catholic identity.

Diocesan personnel must assume the lead in continuing to enhance programs that will result in the formative development of Catholic school educators. The increasing number of laity who are staffing and administering Catholic schools must receive the information they need to understand, create, preserve, and advance the identity of a Catholic school.

There is need for continuing and practical support structures so the discussion of Catholic identity may continue to lead to activities and policies that grow out of the ECOS process.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The level of commitment required to sustain or stabilize the values project cannot be left to chance. While autonomy is a key component in the diocesan school structure, there are programs and processes within the structure that must be utilized in institutionalizing the project.

Catholic school administrators and teachers should consider a number of steps if they desire to initiate, support, and incorporate a values infusion program:

1. The Catholic values infusion program should be made part of the diocesan self-study process and the diocesan evaluation program for principals.
2. Superintendents and principals must express a commitment to the program and demonstrate that commitment by providing resources, including personnel, to support the program.
3. Diocesan professional development programs should include annual workshops for teachers and administrators on values infusion. The ECOS training should take place each year. Like the infusion of values, it can be neither serendipitous nor assumed to be transmitted informally.
4. A process must be designed in which the diocesan catechist formation programs and the values infusion project support each other through sharing resources and increased collaboration within the diocesan office.

## SUMMARY

ECOS provided an initial step in opening a dialogue on Catholic education, Catholic values, and Catholic identity. It was a useful instrument for concretizing the permeation of Catholic values throughout the curriculum.

The preservation and growth of a truly Catholic education system depends on a clear understanding of the identity of the Catholic school by all members of the Catholic-school community. The permeation of Catholic values throughout the curriculum is a primary source and trademark of that Catholic identity. Knowledge of the theological and philosophical foundations that are at the heart of the Catholic education apostolate is essential for Catholic school administrators and teachers. Until this knowledge becomes personally appropriated and translated into the everyday school routine, Catholic school identity will remain vague and elusive.

The plurality and diversity within Catholic school faculties heighten the challenge to keep teachers and administrators informed on religious issues and to make resources available within the structure of the system.

In essence, Catholic education must reflect the fact that human beings believe they are made in the image and likeness of God (Link, 1991). "Those of us in Catholic education have two formidable challenges, neither of which will go away: our children and the gospel" (O'Malley, 1991, p. 9). Our response to those challenges will never end.

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